

Tapes: 021, 022

Interview with Ron Hofman

Conducted by Bob Stewart

February 18, 1988

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INTERVIEW WITH RON HOFMAN

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SIDE ONE OF THE TAPE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING. THIS SIDE STARTED LIKE THIS.

BOB: I think we missed at the beginning of this tape.

RON: Of this tape? Okay. So, Secretary Hickel in the early '70's established the task force on environmental education and _____ activities. And the task force prepared for the first or coordinated activities for the first earth day in April of 1970. And BLM had a representative on that task force. And BLM was very active in providing speakers for schools and colleges, high school and colleges around in the Washington, DC, area and all around the country. And it turned out that the demand from high schools and colleges was tremendous. People from all over asked for representatives to come and talk about environmental issues. When I talked earlier about the environmental movement, it was pretty clear that we had an environmental movement. We had this kind of demand from people all over to do this. So, that was kind of the initial impact of NEPA [National Environmental Protection Act] on BLM, had to do with this Task Force. It's kind of interesting that Secretary Hickel had his children were involved and this concern. If you'll recall he went over and told President Nixon that he thought he ought to listen to the children more and young people more. And then he finally resigned because he couldn't get the kind of.

BOB: I remember that.

RON: He couldn't get the kind of interest that he felt was important out of the White House. And he complained because he couldn't get the ear of the President, couldn't get through the staff. So, the responsibility for implementing NEPA fell on the Division that I was then in charge of because Bob Jones was away at college. So, it became.

BOB: What was the name of that Division again?

RON: Well, it was the Division of Program Development. And we changed it to Division of Environmental Planning Coordination to reflect these new responsibilities. And so, what NEPA did, in effect, was a couple of things. First of all, it established a policy that, national policy, that we would be concerned about, environmental quality of our activities. It expressed an interest in cumulative impacts and taking the ecosystem approach to management and environmental issues, not just looking at specific resource programs. For example, by taking a look at the cumulative impacts of those programs and the interrelationships of those programs and an ecosystem approach. Out of that developed sort of the interdisciplinary

TAPE WENT OUT.

And the other part of it was environmental education and it sort of grew out of earth day too because the premise here was that if we're really going to take care of our environment, we have to begin by teaching the people in the country how to do that and what the issues are. And that was a very strong part of NEPA. And one of the first sort of battles we had in BLM was whether or not BLM ought to be engaged in something called education. And where that should be. Now, there were people in BLM who felt like we shouldn't be engaged in it at all. That was a part of the Department of Education, the Office of Education. And then there were other people who felt like well, that's really a public affairs activity. And up until then, we had had something called conservation education which public affairs people sort of did. But the philosophy was entirely different. Conservation education was oriented towards helping learning people learn the scientific names of trees as they went along a trail. And our concept of environmental education was learning about how the environment contributes to your life as a total thing. And what your responsibility is to manage and protect that. And so, we came up with the idea of doing some, in addition to providing speakers and things, we came up with the idea of developing environmental study areas on public lands. And we had environmental study areas set up, which this was really kind of an underground thing where we used the budget process to direct certain District Managers who were willing to do this, to do it. And we had one in Casper, Dick Kerr was the District Manager at that time. And we had one in Boise, we had one in Billings, and we had two in Oregon. And what we did was we convinced the District Managers that it would be nice to set up these environmental study areas and typically what they would do would be go to local school and work with the science teacher, the science department and we would hire the science teacher as a summer

employee to go out on the area and develop a curriculum. And the in the following fall, he would take his class out and we developed an interaction between BLM and the schools, especially the science departments where they began to use these areas for classes. And the thing was so popular that, you know, they were taking 6th grade students out and then they were taking 5th grade students out. They were taking, all these people wanted to go out for a week or two onto the public lands, and we helped developed the curriculum with the school. And the whole idea was to get these people to understand the importance of natural resources and natural resource management on the community. Where did the water come from? You know, where does the food and fiber come from, where does the timber come from, where does the silt in the reservoir come from? So, we felt that like that that was one of the components, one of jobs under NEPA was to develop an awareness of this among the people.

BOB: You know what I'm thinking in terms of this sidebar that you're going to be writing. Most people when they think of NEPA, they think, oh, Environmental Impact Statements, Environmental Assessments. This is a whole another area of the NEPA that a lot of people have forgotten about.

RON: Right.

BOB: This might be appropriate for you to say, you know, the other side of NEPA. I'm not sure we've got time to think about this.

RON: I want to talk about this because it is something that most people didn't know about or didn't think about. In fact, we put out a manual finally in 1974 which you can find, I'm sure, which is an Environmental Education Inventories Manual. The other thing we did on environmental education was we developed curriculum and one of the best documents in my mind that the Bureau ever put out was a document called, All Around You. And it was put out in July of 1971 and was developed by a team of students and one of the people on my staff. And what it was was a curriculum that teachers could use and go out into the school yard and out into the public lands and use the public lands as a classroom. I should have brought a copy of it with me.

BOB: Oh, we will get one. We have a library here.

RON: And we tested that, as a matter of fact, in one of the schools in Charlottesville, Virginia, because we were right close by, and it was so popular in that school that they decided that they would have the senior class use it to teach the grade school classes as a joint project. And the real exciting thing about it was the State of Pennsylvania, the Department of Education in the State of Pennsylvania adopted that as a text, an official text in the State of Pennsylvania for all the schools in the State of Pennsylvania for 6th grade teachers. There were all kinds of things like that going on that most people don't know about. And I think there's still some remnants of that, the environmental study areas going on. You'll find here and there in the Bureau where they'll take classes out and so forth.

BOB: I think it depends a lot on individual schools and teachers.

RON: Right. But we were trying to develop that as an official position of the Bureau. And we started out sort of underground and then it got so popular, it became, it happened.

BOB: What you got, a program?

RON: We call it the Environmental Education Program.

BOB: Now here's the question. Why has it essentially disappeared? I mean you're right. You still see it in a few places in the Bureau. For instance, at the Montana State Office. I know when I first started back there in '78, we had an environmental education area. But by the time I left, nobody ever talked about it, and I don't think it was every used and we did have a few geologists from time to time who would take kids out south of town and go through geology and look for fossils and do a few things like that. But in some respects, that was discouraged cause I know the geologists who were working on that were not always allowed the time from work to go out with the school. Why do you think this whole thing, I mean, here we're taking a position of leadership in terms

of this type of education and then all of sudden it essentially dies.

RON: The same thing happened in the Forest Service. The Forest Service and BLM worked very closely together. There were some really, really talented people in the Forest Service that were doing this, setting up classrooms on Forest Service lands and so forth.

BOB: I used to work in Fish and Wildlife Service. And Fish and Wildlife had a, quite a program, too.

RON: Yeah. We had a group in the Department that we would get together with Fish and Wildlife Service and Forest Service, and we would do all these things. I think what happened was as this environmental movement kind of ground down in the cycle and the awareness went off it and the National Environmental Policy Acts were passed, and people erroneously feel that when legislation is passed, the problem's solved. And then the concern about the energy crisis started the ascendancy. As I see it, the environmental movement was going downhill, and the energy movement was going uphill. And the focus just went off of this. And I think a lot of people in the Bureau and in the Forest Service who were more the traditionalists saw this as something that was outside of the normal thing that the Bureau should be doing. And as money got tighter and the budgets got tighter, we went back to the traditional things, and we did away with this other things which people felt weren't essential to the Bureau's mission. So, I believe that's why it went downhill. But, while it was going, it was really well received, and the BLM had a tremendous amount of respect in these local communities for initiating these things in the school systems. We gave teachers jobs. In fact, I believe, it was either the one in Boise or the one in Billings. One of them, we even took retired people out in buses to these areas. People from old people's homes and things, you know. So, it wasn't just the children. It was the old people who were looking for some kind of program to get interested in and learn about. We'd take them up there and show them, you know, what this area does for your community. Understand, get respect for it and support what we're trying to do. And some of these District Managers who did that can tell you the value they got for the Bureau in their local community.

BOB: Well, you know, it's kind of, it's such a shame that so

few people know about BLM. You know, you go to give talks in schools, and you know, even a place like Roswell. I was there for two years, and people don't know about BLM and they're living with BLM all around them. It's kind of.

RON: I think that's true. I grew up in Colorado. I grew up in Colorado Springs, military town, essentially. Knew about the Forest Service, knew about the National Park Service, knew about Fish and Wildlife Service. I never knew BLM existed until I was in college and one time we went to an old ghost mine town near Gunnison, Colorado, Vulcan, and there was a sign there, a strange little triangle with a river and a mountain and a tree and said something about Bureau of Land Management. And but even then, I mean, other than just seeing it, I really didn't know what the Bureau of Land Management was or anything. And didn't really learn that until actually I joined the Bureau.

BOB: I didn't know about the Bureau til I was in college. You know, this is, what you were saying though, it occurred to me that BLM and when we write a history about BLM, programs and priorities shift a lot. It's just kind of the nature of the beast that there was this wonderful thing that I think all of us really enjoy at the environmental movement and it resulted in some very power legislation, and it really affected us a lot. And you know, we still have the Environmental Assessments, and the Environmental Impact Statements will never leave. But this thing called environmental education was like you say was a passionate thing for quite a while. The focus seemed to shift and priorities kind of shifted. And Wild Horse Program is kind of interesting to look at in terms of, you know, how our job is a land management agency kind of changes.

RON: We had an environmental education workshop, a Bureauwide environmental education workshop in Fort Collins in 1971.

BOB: 1971?

RON: Yeah. And we got people from all over the Bureau to come to this and we talked about the need for environmental education, what it was really all about. We had us a speaker. A man named

David Hawkins from the University of Colorado, who was doing.

BOB: Yeah, I know him.

RON: You know him, Hawkins? He and his wife had a deal where Rocky Mountain Center for Environmental Education, I think it was called, super guy, super guy. My wife and I. He's dead, you know. I know his wife and his daughter real well.

BOB: My parents were friends of David and Frances.

RON: Really?

BOB: And I was just a kid.

RON: Super people, dedicated people. Anyway, the environmental education workshop was really interesting because it was like a clash of philosophies about how to go about developing these education programs. And we had sort of the old conservation education people who wanted scientific names. A lot of skeptics but out of it came, I think, a tremendous awareness of what the Bureau could do to develop a lot of public support and understanding of the Bureau's mission. And the impact of the Bureau of the lives of these western communities. So, anyway, that was kind of short happy life of environmental education. It was an exciting time. The other thing that happened was because we had these requirements for Environmental Impact Statements, we had to begin to develop some policies and procedures to make that happen. And of course, the CQ was responsible for the guidelines, but they were just getting started too. And there was an employee, a staff member for the council named Barry Flamm from the Forest Service who was a friend of mine. And I used to have lunch with him a couple times a week and we'd talked about these guidelines and what they should include and so forth. And so, we were kind of developing our own procedures and guidelines as we went along. And in the spring of 1971, we put out our manual on how the Bureau would write Environmental Impact Statements and what our policy was. And we were really ahead of what the Department was doing or anybody else was doing in this area. And I think mainly because of the fact that Barry and I just

would talk every week about what we should be doing. And, of course, the Forest Service was moving along on it too because Barry was on loan to CQ from the Forest Service.

BOB: What was his name Barry Flamm?

RON: Flamm. F L A M M. So, one of the things we had to do, of course, was address this interdisciplinary approach which I talked about before. And that sort of came out of what the National Environmental Policy Act said about the impacts. And it wasn't just impacts on the environment. It was impacts on the human environment. And the word human in there. A lot of people don't think that that exists. Just as the environment, it's just the human environment. And the whole background that NEPA talked about, not just impacts on the trees and the flowers and the wildlife or the air and the water, but the impacts on people. And this brought a whole new dimension to BLM where we really had to begin to develop the expertise in the Bureau to deal with impacts on the human environment. And what that meant was, what it evolved into was the need to hire sociologists. We hired a sociologist at that time. The visual impact, we hired a fellow named Roger Nelson who was working in Colorado at that time, come back to Washington to develop procedures for the Bureau to be able to evaluate the impacts on, the visual impacts on what we did. We hired a sociologist to help us develop procedures on, impacts on cultures. You know, what kind of impact does this have on Native Americans, for example. And the courts are full of cases even today where what the Government does impinges on Native Americans, their religious beliefs and so forth because a lot of the culture of Native Americans is tied to the land and the resources on the land.

BOB: Well, look at the scrapping of the Powder River Coal Plant is basically because of the failure to adequately take into the account the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation. Yeah, you're right.

RON: And what they call the G-O Road Case of the Forest Service. They built a road into an area to harvest timber in an area that religious significance. The Bureau hadn't thought about this to any extent before NEPA passed, so it's like opening a new dimension of programs for BLM. Social issues, cultural issues, visual issues, and economic issues. Now the Bureau was sort of into economic issues in the planning system already so that wasn't

a totally new dimension but maybe just added to the need for looking at some of these economic impacts. So, I think one of the big impacts in the Bureau was the fact that we now we're required to look at a different kind of thing that what we were doing before and that required new skills and so we hired these people to come on board and do these things for us. And we were developing the guidelines for evaluating impacts of Bureau actions on the environment and we include in the environment these things, cultural impacts and visual impacts and so forth. The other thing that NEPA did was stress this interdisciplinary approach and that wasn't too hard for the Bureau to understand because of the planning system was already in place where each resource kind of looked at its own program and then they were all sort of put into a pot to look at the conflicts of the planning process. And then out of that pot, we would make decisions about what to do. So, the National Environmental Policy Act had the same approach. It said when you're looking at impacts, you need to take a look at how these impacts interrelate with one another. Like if you build a road, it can have visual impacts and then if it's too steep, the water can run down and so you've got a runoff problem that can go into a stream which can affect the quality of the fish in the stream and can affect the people who have fished in the stream. And the fish are dead because the silt went in the reservoir because the road, you know. So, we use those examples as the kind of things that need to be looked at. And so, people need to do that jointly when they're doing impact assessment work and writing Impact Statements. And then the other part of it was the cumulative nature of what we did, and we had to take a look at the cumulative nature. So, we developed these procedures and put them out in 1971. At the same time, there was this idea of Environmental Assessments, what we call EARS, you know, Environmental Assessments. And what NEPA said was you had to do Environmental Impact Statements, or the guidelines said you had to do Environmental Impact Statements if there were significant impacts on the human environment. But it also said that we had to evaluate everything we did to see if there was an impact and try and mitigate it. So, there became this big issue about environmental statements versus everything else we did. And we came up with this idea of Environmental Assessments. Environmental Assessments, there was two objectives there. One objective was to comply with the intent of NEPA which was to take a look at the environmental impacts of everything you did to see if you could mitigate some of them. The other thing which sold well in BLM was that if we did environmental assessments and found out there was no significant impact, we could document the fact that we didn't have to do an EIS. And so that became almost the biggest selling point.

Not the fact that we were going to look at the environmental impacts and mitigate them but the fact that oh boy, if we do this, we won't have to write so many Environmental Impact Statements. I mean there were some people that really felt we should be taking a look at things. But a lot of people felt like, well, this will get us out of doing a lot of Environmental Impact Statements. So, we also put out instructions for doing environmental assessment work. And that never came out in a manual, but it was part of the directives system. And if you go back and dig out those directives, we still have copies of them, you can find a memorandum that provides a packet for doing Environmental Assessments. And it includes in it doing assessments on visual and cultural and those kind of things that I spoke of earlier.

BOB: Any idea how we would find that memo? Could I call somebody in the planning?

RON: No. I think you'd have to go to people who run Directives. And go back.

BOB: '71 or '72 era?

RON: Yeah. And look at something called or something that says Environmental Assessment Procedures or Guidelines or something like that.

BOB: And that'd be somewhere around '71, '72?

RON: Right.

BOB: Okay. Great.

RON: Now the other thing we had to do was review
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RON: The other implication on BLM was the requirement for

reviewing of other agencies' Environmental Impact Statement. And what NEPA had in mind here was that when agencies took an action, they often weren't able to determine the impacts of that action because they didn't have the expertise in that agency to do it. The idea was why not send this environmental impact statement around to other agencies that had that expertise and have them look at it and comment on it. So, this was like opening a door for criticism. And what happened to BLM was because BLM has such a wide variety of professionalism and programs, and because BLM has a large geographic area of responsibility, that BLM got to review a lot of Environmental Impact Statements. So, all of a sudden this became a tremendous workload. We were asked to review many, many, many statements. And originally this was sort of all funneled through the Division that I was running in Washington at that time. And we hired someone to do that. You know John Kwiatkowski?

BOB: I used to work for him.

RON: You know John?

BOB: Yeah.

RON: Well, John was the one that we hired initially to do that in Washington. And later we had someone else do it, but John started out doing that. But what happened was kind of a golden rule thing here and it developed where. Here was an opportunity for an agency to be very critical of another agency and what they had done or what they were about to do. The only problem with that was that the other agency also had the opportunity to be critical of you. So, what happened from a bureaucratic sense was initially there were a lot of comments that were critical. But over time, it became sort of the new politeness where we would not be too critical of other agencies because they might be very critical of us. And so, it came around to where we would just comment on things that would directly affect us. Instead of commenting on things that might be impacted because of what they were doing. And so, I think the meaning and the intent of the Act was diluted over time. And we still review Environmental Impact Statements and I think it's become kind of a mostly useless exercise.

BOB: But has that, has the Act become diluted because of that or is it really still in place because while maybe agencies aren't as critical of other agencies as they should be, the environmental groups aren't shy about expressing their opinion.

RON: Right. That's another implication of providing information to outside groups. That's certainly true that providing all this information to outside groups, it gives them a handle on how to become more involved in our decision making. But the. An interesting story was one of the first Environmental Impact Statements that the Bureau got to review was the Environmental Impact Statement for the Trans Alaska Pipeline which was coming through at that time. And it was our habit to send this Environmental Impact Statement around to the different technical staffs in Washington and have them look at it. And one individual took it upon himself to write a scathing critique of the impacts of the Trans Alaska Pipeline which then became public and was used heavily by environmental groups as an in-house piece. And, as a matter of fact, the individual who did it was a geographer and did a super analysis of the shortfalls of this statement. It wasn't intended to say this is a bad project.

BOB: What agency did that EIS? I would have thought BLM would have.

RON: BLM did do it.

BOB: Oh, okay, I thought.

RON: But we were sending it around for internal review.

BOB: Okay. I thought for a minute that it was another agency EIS that we were reviewing. Okay. Did the Alaska State Office do it?

RON: No. It was somebody from the Washington Office.

BOB: Okay. Who made the comments, then? I meant but did the BLM Alaska write the statement?

RON: I really can't remember whether it was them or whether it was a joint effort or not.

BOB: It could have been the Department of Energy, too. I don't know.

RON: No. Not around yet.

BOB: Okay.

RON: We probably need to check this out because there was a Project Office in the Department that was running the Trans Alaska Pipeline process. It was being run at the departmental level.

BOB: Okay. We can get that. I can get that.

RON: Yeah. In fact, our previous Deputy for Energy and Minerals before Lawton, Bob Lawton. What was his name? Was in charge of that office at that time. Anyway, the interesting part of it was that here was a concept that was put into place and because of the, sort of the bureaucratic rules of behavior, it sort of got diminished.

BOB: {****Sinoski****} was Acting before Lawton came on.

RON: No, it was. But he ran that office in the Department and then he went to private industry and then he came back to BLM. So, the other thing was the implications for public participation. And it also says in NEPA that if it has significant impacts or is highly controversial, you have to do an Environmental Impact Statement. So, then the question was well, what is highly, how much is highly controversial. And as you said, the writing of an Environmental Impact Statement and the public review requirements of that gave a

whole new meaning to public participation in a decision making. And you know if you take kind of a look at BLM's history and about how decisions get made, the planning system tended to open up that decision making process in the '60's and so it was not like a total jolt that we were now going to have more public involvement and documents. We were sort of already at a place where we were doing that. And I think.

BOB: Udall had a lot to say about that.

RON: Right.

BOB: And I think that was required in some of the other Acts. Classification and Multiple Use required some form of.

RON: But I think what was happened was, a couple of things. One is there was a growing national interest in the environment. And there were many more interest groups that were concerned about it, so there were not just the old traditional groups, there were new groups. And those groups were becoming more and more educated and informed and more powerful in terms of their ability to go through the judicial process and the legislative process to get their way. They couldn't get it through the administrative process. And so, what happened was there became like a whole new body of law. And we now had something called environmental law that was never there before. And you have organizations in the Department of Justice that deal with environmental law. You have solicitors in the Department of the Interior who are environmental law people. You have experts in the agencies that have to understand about environmental law. And that's just all happened because of NEPA and the implementation of it and the interpretation, the legal interpretation of what it meant to agencies.

BOB: Would you call NEPA a culmination? We have this list of legislation. There were a lot of things in the '60's and, of course, in the '70's but right at the end of the decade, NEPA. We've got a list of a dozen other Acts that preceded it or more.

RON: I wouldn't call it a culmination so much as a. It

provided a framework, okay? For national environmental concern by this expression of national policy. What you say raised an interesting point because the other environmental legislation that was passed including the cultural, there's a Cultural Act and there was Endangered Species Act and several others were mainly oriented toward specific impacts.

BOB: Good point, yeah.

RON: And so, what those Act said in effect was when agencies do things, they can't have too severe of an impact on these individual issues, these individual resources. And NEPA comes along and says, okay, but you have to look at all these things together. And the problem with that is that if you have these single interest pieces of legislation, it puts a constraint on the agency to be, it sort of sets that resource up as having the highest value. So, you have legislation that dictates that rare and endangered species have the highest value and you have another one that says cultural is the highest value and this is the highest value, that is the highest value, and this is the highest value. And it's a real constraint on an agency that's a multiple use agency. And then you have NEPA that comes along and says now wait a minute, you have to look at all these things. Okay? And then decide what's the best thing to do. I think these individual pieces of legislation are the result of interest groups that are oriented around those single resources. But what NEPA did was, I think, put some reasonable lists in decision making by saying, you know, all those things are important, you have to look at all of them, but you don't give more consideration to this than you do to this. And that's what these other laws say. You get more consideration of wildlife than you do this other stuff. So, I think NEPA was a more reasonable approach to in fact, for guidance for agencies to look at impact. And it also said in NEPA that you have to take a look at the environmental value along with other decision criteria, such as national security, economic welfare, and all these other things. So, NEPA didn't say the environment is more important than these other things. It just said not enough was being done to look at environmental issues and sometimes we look more at the economic impacts than we did the environmental impacts and we just wanted to bring that consideration up in the decision-making process and look at the whole thing. But public participation was, the impact of NEPA on the Bureau's public participation guidelines and policies was pretty significant. First of all, I think it reinforced what we were doing in planning

already and it was a benefit to have that. So, it wasn't new to us. But I think it also sort of brought a new dimension to public participation in that we were asking for people's impact on some of these intangible things that the Bureau hadn't look at before like the cultural values and some of these other things. It expanded the arena of public participation. And I think the results of the philosophy developing that people had a right to be involved in decisions or actions that were going to affect their lives. So, it was more a feeling of giving the public more power in decision making not just asking them if they knew about something and then tell us and we'll crank into the system. But actually, participating with the public and giving them power to influence us in the decision. And I think that was kind of a major step forward in the Bureau's public participation philosophy.

BOB: And so, there was a genuine recognition. I mean, once NEPA was enacted, I mean that was kind of the way it was. You would have public participation.

RON: I think.

BOB: Or at least a little bit more.

RON: Right. I think what happened was that some of the environmental groups who really weren't interested in negotiating or compromising but were really interested in using the judicial and legislative process to gain their comparative advantage weren't really interested in participating in the decision making. What they wanted to do was keep us straight based on their objective. And the way they did that was wait til we did something and if they didn't like it, they would nail us through the courts as what happened in the Grazing Environmental Impact Statements. The Grazing Environmental Impact Statement issue was kind of interesting because we were developing a policy at the time of doing sort of a hierarchy of environmental impact assessments or statements. And one of them would be with the plan, you know, during the planning process, and then the next one would be sort of the activity plan level and then the third one would be at the project level. And what we would do was take a look at the environmental impact, see if they were significant and decide whether to do an Environmental Impact Statement or not. And then came this issue of Programmatic

Environmental Impact Statements. And the thought there was when we made some programmatic policy and procedure, what impact would that have on the entire program? And the discussion about that was well, it's pretty hard to foresee an entire program what specific impacts are going to be. So, why do we have to do this? Especially if we're already going to do one on the plan, activity plan, and project out there on the ground, why do we have to do this total thing? But because these programs were so huge in scope like the coal program. You know, we did a coal programmatic statement. And I can't exactly remember the timing, but it seemed to me that we had kind of agreed that a coal programmatic statement would be something we would do. And then all of a sudden, the idea of well, why aren't you doing these Grazing Environmental Impact Statements came up. And I think we were sort of heading in the direction of doing something on Grazing Environmental Impact Statements at the time we were nailed legally for not doing them. And I almost think the Bureau took a bad rap on that because I think we were probably going to end out doing something like that anyway at the time we were forced to do it. And then it looked like we weren't interested in doing it and somebody else made us do it. And we ended out doing, you know, groups and then we broke it up all around the country.

BOB: We'll never know.

RON: No, but I do think that it might be worthwhile saying something about the fact that this was not something that was objectionable to BLM in a philosophical way because we were heading in this direction and the coal program stayed and so forth. It's just that, you know, we were kind of boxed into it and once it was in the courts, we couldn't then say okay we were going to do it anyway.

BOB: Cause NEPA is going to be with us. This is a piece of legislation that won't go away, I don't think.

RON: But after we developed the policies and the procedures for Environmental Assessments, environmental, writing Environmental Impact Statements, reviewing Environmental Impact Statements, environmental education and public participation which took about 2 or 3 years to really get all that formally in the system, then we went into a training mode. And we spent about a year and a half

traveling around each state giving training on writing statements, doing assessments, talked about environmental education, public participation. We put out training sessions in every state. And some states, we did two, you know, north and south or whatever. And it's another part of the process where you have a national piece of legislation because of the bureaucratic process it has to be developed into a Bureauwide system of the manuals and the directives and so forth. There has to be agreement. CQ had to come in and do their thing. The Department had to come in and do their thing. And it takes time to get all that put together and meantime, stuff is happening out here in the field, and you keep trying to do things. But it has to be sort of, you know, on a crisis basis where you're reacting or it's an ad hoc thing or it's an underground thing where you try to do something under the system to make it happen. And then when you finally get it all put together, after all this time, then there has to be this other period of time where you go out and explain it to everyone. And say, okay, here's how to do this now and here's why we're doing it, and how to do it and so forth. And it's not just a training deal, it's a selling deal too because there were a lot of concerns about the work. There was a lot of concern in BLM about the time it was going to take to do all this when we had other things to do. Another interesting thing that came up in BLM in terms of philosophy was that a lot of people in BLM really felt that we were already taking care of the environment. I mean, if you go to school to be a forester or wildlife biologist, you kind of feel like you're on the side of the environment. So, there was kind of an ambiguity there and viewpoint because NEPA said you have to take and look at the environment and consider in decisions and a lot of people in BLM said, well, we're already doing that. I mean, we manage the resource and we're already doing that. But NEPA says well, but you're looking at it individually, you're not looking at the cumulative impacts and you're not looking at the interrelationships between these things. And that's sort of what we're talking about. So, we had to convince people that they weren't doing it anyway or least not totally. So, that was a double-edge sword.

BOB: Yeah.

RON: We established environmental coordinators in the states and they became, you know, part of the organization for operating at the state level and giving training and so forth. So, it sort of filtered down organizationally where we had major project that

needed Environmental Impact Statements like a lot of these big power projects. What we called non-Bureau energy initiatives; you remember NBEI.

BOB: I don't.

RON: Well, there were so many of those that the program divisions in Washington then also began to get people who understood about the Environmental Impact Statements in Washington. So, it became. It evolved from a establishing policy and procedure to an implementation mode of doing Environmental Impact Statements. And there were a lot of them and big ones that needed to be done. The Divisions in Washington set up their own staffs to do them to assist the field. Some States created in their environmental assistance organizations teams to do Environmental Impact Statements at a Statewide level. So, we had these big teams. New Mexico had like forty people that were working on Environmental Impact Statements. Utah had teams that were doing Environmental Impact Statements. We set up one in the Denver Service Center that was going to do major Environmental Impact Statements. And the idea was that rather than have a bunch of people running around doing these things on ad hoc basis. There were enough of them which were really big ones, millions of dollars that we would get. And people who were experts and have them do them. And the cost of these things was tremendous and that was one of the other implications of NEPA. It really levered the Bureau of Land Management budget up.

BOB: Okay, so it didn't drain other programs, it just.

RON: It levered it up.

BOB: It levered up our appropriations?

RON: Yeah, because we were in fact required to do this. We'd go to Congress and say. If you go back and look at the old budget documents, it said, you know, in order to get all these big power projects on line, we need an Environmental Impact Statements, we need so much money, and we were increased the money to do it. And the other thing was finally this idea of an environmental assistance

staff in Washington, the purpose of that staff was to assist States who were doing Environmental Impact Statements. In other words, if your State had to do one, people from the environmental assistance staff would go out and train a team in that State to do it. And they'd kind of guide them through the process. By that time, I think a lot of the and Dick Johnson, who's now in California, became the head of that staff. I began to head that staff up and then I went to the Department. And Dick Johnson actually ran that group for a couple of years. But the Divisions began to set up their own. The States began to set up their own. There's one in the Service Center. And we just really got into the business of doing Environmental Impact Statements. It was a big, big thing.

BOB: Just out of curiosity, I don't know if you have any guess on this, but do you have any idea of pre-NEPA BLM employee and post-NEPA. In other words, and this is too speculative, you know, did NEPA perhaps cause BLM to grow by 40 or 50 percent?

RON: It caused BLM to grow significantly, especially in some of these other skills that we've never had before. What we call scarce skills. And also, the workload increased so that the employment increased to do the work. I would say, like we had about 3500 employees when NEPA passed in the Bureau. And if you go and take a look at, that was in 1970, if you take a look at what we had in 1976, I'd say over that six-year period, the biggest thing the Bureau did was environmental work. You could probably take 60 percent of that increase as a minimum, 60 percent of that increase and attribute it to NEPA work, I would say. I'd get a lot of arguments _____ probably.

BOB: Probably.

RON: We continued to do earth day stuff. We continued to do environmental education stuff. We put together material for training. We gave the training. We provided technical assistance. I would say the '70's were a very interesting time and the exciting time

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BOB: You know under that Schedule P or whatever, we don't pay

them.

RON: The public participation part of it like I started to say earlier. That became such a major part of it that the Forest Service and BLM and it was one individual in the Forest Service and myself in BLM decided that this was a whole program area all in itself called Public Participation and Government Decision-making. And we had a lot of discussions about this and finally we helped found a group called the Interagency Council on Citizen Participation. And this Council was under the auspices of the President's Consumer Affairs Advisor at the White House and operated through an Office of Consumer Affairs in HEW which gave it the formal legitimacy that it needed. But we formed an organization called the Interagency Council on Citizen Participation, had a charter, had monthly meetings. And we had every major federal agency in Washington, DC, represented. And out of that came some guidelines and training that we used in BLM on public participation. And I see the evolution of public participation going from in the old days where we just kind of told people what we were going to do to the second phase where we asked if they knew anything that might be helpful and then we told them what we were going to do to the idea that well, we'd have a few public meetings in the planning process and then we'd tell them what we were going to do. To the environmental impact statement phase where we gave them, it was more of a rigorous requirement on actual feedback to them. When they gave us input, we were required to tell them what we did with the input. To what I see today as what I call sort of a collaborative problem solving or collaborative decision-making process which is really epitomized in the stewardship program where we, in fact, go out on the ground with interested local users and make decisions as a group about what to do. And what that does is give us decisions that are not appealed, that don't go through the legislative or judicial route to change. And we get public support for it. I think NEPA was like a major step moving that toward where we are today. I don't think we're still where we need to be in terms of formalizing that collaborative approach but there are enough people out there using the collaborative approach and using it real well that I guess I'm optimistic that finally the Bureau will formalize that type of approach to decision-making. I've run out.

BOB: That's great stuff. It's a lot to digest. Well, let me ask you one really loaded question. You can decline to answer but although your career is far from over, kind of take.

RON: You're being kind. It's pretty close to being over.

BOB: Taking a look back, what do you think have been. Well, there's going to be several parts to this question. What are the positive changes in the Bureau? Some of them we've gone over but, you know, just kind of capsulize it. Positive changes you've seen in the Bureau since the day you started and perhaps also some of the things that you think have not gone so well, maybe some of the negatives. And then also going to kind of you yourself, you know, what do you feel you have accomplished in terms of your career in BLM? Like I said, you don't have to answer this if you don't want to.

RON: You have a lot of time? Have a lot of time left? The positive impacts of NEPA on the BLM is just number one, a greater awareness.

BOB: Not just NEPA though, I mean other things.

RON: Other things that I've done?

BOB: Yeah.

RON: Okay. Then I'll back up some. When I first started working with BLM as a Forester in the public domain where it was clear that the whole land wasn't covered with big trees, it became clear to me that what my job was was to manage all of the resources on the land, not just the trees. And other people should be managing not just the grass but the other resources. So, within my program of forest management on the public lands, I tried to take into consideration woodland products, timber products, we would sell wildings, we would sell pinon nuts. In other words, all of the products off the public land became products that if they were usable to people, I felt like I should manage them. Not just the timber. And I also had an appreciation for what I did in terms of development, any kind of development, on the land in my program would also have impacts on wildlife and the vegetation and the siltation and the visual impacts of roads and things like that. So, I kind of got this attitude about and I know ecosystem is kind of a

technical term and I know it's a term that a lot of people don't like because if they don't like the environment, they don't like ecosystems, but really in what I came to understand was is that we are managing ecosystems. We are managing all those things out there that go into that bundle of resources. And it's not just the resources themselves but it's the interactions between them and the processes that are going on out there. So, it's not a static thing. We have to take a look at whether things are going uphill or downhill or staying the same. And follow that out through time. So, I had this appreciation, I think, for a total resource management job with ecosystem management.

BOB: And you kind of started with that kind of early.

RON: I did and the reason why I stuck

BOB: And your leaning towards the Bureau is.

RON: Right. And so, it was my opinion in 1958 that the BLM ought to be managing that way and not be fragmenting all these things. And so, you know, just to say, well, looking back from where I am now to where I was in 1958, not because of so many things. I mean I did some things that contribute to that, right? But today I think the Bureau is much, much closer to that concept than they were in 1958. An example is the whole approach that was taken to get support for the Public Rangelands and Improvement Act, PRIA, was to sell rangelands improvements to not only the livestock operators but to the wildlife interests and the soil and water interests and all these other environmental interests. The first time the Bureau ever put together a coalition of support for a piece of legislation and get it passed. And the reason why they did it was because all these people understood that if the range is in good shape, everybody benefits, not just the rancher. Now, that sounds pretty simple but putting the coalition together behind it to make it happen is not so simple. So, to my way of thinking, I helped contribute to that approach to management. And I did it mainly through the implementation. I mean I developed the policies and procedures and gave the training and backed the formal and informal pushes towards implementing NEPA in BLM. I did that six years of my life. And through that effort, I think, I was able to contribute to moving the Bureau towards that approach to management. If you

can take a look at where the Bureau's going in the future, I think that the Bureau is now in the middle of a crisis situation. And if we don't get public support for our mission in five or ten years from now, we may not exist. We don't have a constituency for multiple use. And we've developed constituencies with different interest groups but that's a transitional and highly voluble way to approach support for your agency. And as administration changes depending on change. It used to be that no matter what Administration was in power, they had some sort of agreement whether they were Republicans or Democrats about resource management. And one may have been a little more conservative and one a little bit more, you know, liberal about that. But they were sort of professional resource managers and both parties, they got to run the agencies when they got in. The last two Administrations I've seen a tremendous swing towards the environmental side and a tremendous swing toward the development side and the Bureau has swung along with it. And we don't have support as an agency for something called multiple use. And without that, I think, you know, we're just going to cease to exist. So, in order to get that support for something called multiple use where we have to make the decisions both for development and for environment, I think we have to begin to build this process of collaborative decision-making and get these people all involved, especially at the local level. And get agreement about decisions and support for those decisions. Now we're never going to completely satisfy people on either end of the spectrum. We're always going to have people out there that won't compromise who say everything has to be protected. We've got other people who just think anybody who's an environmentalist is a nut.

BOB: Oh, it's incredible the polarization.

RON: There is. But what the Bureau has to do if it's to survive and complete its mission, I believe, is to lop off the 5 or 10 percent of either side and develop a decision-making process for these people in the middle at the local level and formalize that process and adopt that process. And says this is the way we're going to make decisions. We're going to take into account all these things, look at everything, take everybody's point of view, and develop decisions based on that. The planning system never did that for us. The environmental stuff never did that for us. We're really talking about process more than we are procedure. So, anyway, that's kind of where I think we've come where I started with it. I think that my main contribution was by just by chance being

put in charge of implementing NEPA in BLM. And that gave me an opportunity to develop the policies and procedures and give the training which moved the Bureau that way. I think the Bureau has a better appreciation for the big picture because of it. I think they've got a better appreciation of the interrelationships between programs because of it. I think they've got a better appreciation for social and cultural and economic values because of it. I think we started something in environmental education that was very exciting and still is out there somewhere. And sometimes the idea is there but the name changes, you know. And so this administration calls something, last administration called something public service and this administration calls it project pride or something, you know. It just. But the ideas is the same. And so as long as the idea is alive, why, there's a chance that it'll keep working out there. BLM is so involved in so many programs that I think that there will always be a need for those kinds of decisions. I mean, so maybe we're not doing so much in grazing these days, but if you take a look at recreation, for example, as a program in the Bureau, and it's kind of grown out of what California's done in the desert and around, you know, that thing is off and running. So, I think there will always be some shifts but there will always be a need for the Bureau to be there making decisions in that multiple use context. Public participation, I think, is something that I've been able to contribute to both in a philosophical sense and a procedural sense. So, I feel like my career was pretty interesting because I got a chance to work in the field, I got a chance to work in budget. And I haven't said anything about my work in budget which gave me the opportunity to learn BLM inside and out in three or four years. I mean, you do that, you just know it because you get involved in every aspect of it. And then just out of chance, I happen to be in charge of the Division at a time when this major piece of legislation came through. We had an Assistant Director at that time, Irving Senzel. And Irving, I don't want to leave out Irving. Irving was my Assistant Director at that time. And he understood sort of intuitively and intellectually understood immediately the implications of NEPA for BLM. And supported everything I did 100 percent. Just a wonderful man. Very supportive, good ideas ran interference. You know, from a public administration context, everybody's doing something which they think is important because it occupies their time if nothing else. And something new comes. And that new thing has to force its way into all these other things and people resent that generally because they think it's going to take more work, you know. And so here I was with a piece of legislation, major piece of legislation, major ramifications to implement in it all this thing that's already going

on. And I think I probably did it fairly forcibly sometimes. And sometimes that was necessary. And Irving just supported everything, I mean, he just helped contribute to understanding and helped us hiring people.

BOB: He goes back to GLO days, doesn't he? 1939 is what his record says.

RON: Super guy, super guy. Totally dedicated to BLM.

BOB: And he started a new thing called the Public Lands Foundation for retired BLM employees.

RON: Right.

BOB: Yeah, we've made arrangements. We're going back to Washington the end of the month and we've made arrangements to speak with him. Marion Clawson and Stoddard. All of the ex-Directors are alive since Marion Clawson and we've asked them to contribute sidebars. It's exciting to have that.

RON: Well, BLM has done a lot of innovative things and I would say that in terms of NEPA, we were and certainly within in the Department, BLM was ahead of everyone. Absolutely ahead of everybody in the Department on procedures and policies and guidelines for NEPA. We had the biggest stake in it so it's not, it wouldn't be unusual to say we were ahead of everyone. And I think the context that I had with the Forest Service and with CQ helped a lot. The other thing just as an aside, I guess, because you asked the question. When I was working as a desk officer in the Office of the Secretary, and I actually worked through three different Secretaries. You can't imagine the chaos that exists at the Departmental level when there's a change in administration. In terms of new people coming in who don't even know one another sometimes, trying to find out what's going on and what their role is, so there's a lot of playing around for comparative advantage among the new people. And there's understandably sort of a total lack of trust for the agencies, and it just takes time, 6 months to a year, for the new people to get to where they understand what's

going on, understand their own role and are willing to trust somebody in the agency. And the Office of the Executive Secretary in the Office of the Secretary was set up to help the Secretary make decisions in the Department, Departmental decisions. And one of the biggest contributions I feel I made to the Bureau was that during the transition period, a new administration would come in. I was able to take issues that the Bureau had that needed to be decided on totally critical issues and bring them up through the Assistant Secretary to the Secretary and get an understanding of those issues, why it was important, get a dialogue going, and get a decision made. And, you know, it's kind of like one of those things, unless you're there, you really don't know everything that's going on. But it's just a tremendous amount of pulling and hauling and confusion and hesitancy. No matter how good your transition team is, once the new people come in, it's like new ballgame. And George Turcott convinced me that I should get out of the environmental work because I had been in it too long, six years, for my career. And probably my mental wellbeing. You know, I mean, I'd been working on this thing from day one. And he just said, Ron, there's a really interesting opportunity in the Department. It's something that I think would be good for BLM and I think you're just the person to do it. And would like to have you go upstairs and give it a shot. And he was right. It was time for me to get out of what I was doing. And I needed something new, and it was an exciting challenge. I got to work directly with Secretaries of the Interior, you know, and the Solicitor and the Assistant Secretaries, and it was a super experience for me. And I really helped BLM up there by providing like the critical link at a critical time. And so, I enjoyed that part of my work. I don't view my work on the environment as, you know, the thing in this life. But these other things were exciting and important too.

BOB: Oh, I wanted to ask. Do you have kind of a bibliography or some papers that you would recommend other than what you've mentioned? You know there's the white papers you mentioned but some general publications written about NEPA or implementing NEPA.

RON: Yes, I can put something together.

BOB: I appreciate that.

RON: When I was in Washington, I taught at the USDA Grad School. I taught a course on. Actually, there was three of us that taught. There was an attorney from the Defense Department that taught environmental law. And I taught environmental analysis techniques and another friend of mine taught review of other agencies' environmental impact statements. During the hey days of the environment, we had classes of like 60 to 70 people we were teaching at the USDA Grad School at night. And then I also taught a course in public participation at the USDA Grad School. And from those courses, I have bibliographies that I can dig out and give to you. The one thing that I did bring with me was Temple University had a and they still have it, a center for the study of federalism. And they put out this journal and they asked me to write something on the implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act. And this sort of summarizes a lot of points that I tried to go over today. It doesn't talk about the environmental education part yet which I started out with because I thought it was pretty important.

BOB: I'm tempted to have you, I don't know if you'd want to do two sidebars, one on NEPA and one on environmental education.

RON: I can if you want me to.

BOB: Cause I would really like to see one done about environmental education and I just hadn't, we don't have that on our.

RON: I think that would be a good one because it's something that was critical and kind of never did get the visibility that. It's interesting, when the Bureau sent me to the University of Virginia, as I said, in 1967, '68, and I went back and looked at some of the papers that I did. And here's Command in the Natural Environment, a Look at the Future. It was like it was prophetic, you know? Really, I mean, this environmental movement was really rolling. And I was beginning to take an interest in it in terms of its impact on the Bureau. And then the National Environmental Policy Act, all of a sudden, there it was. And there I was, you know? And it just happened that way. I mean, it was really interesting and I feel fortunate that I was able to do all that. I feel fortunate that I was there, you know. I'm sure I made a lot of mistakes.

BOB: Well, we all do.

RON: You know, it was interesting to try and implement, help implement, in the Bureau something that was that significant.

BOB: Yeah.

RON: I appreciate the opportunity to come and do this.

BOB: We really appreciate it too. This has been really great and it's going to help me a lot because when it comes time to start writing. I've gained a better understanding of some things. I mean I make no bones about the fact that my knowledge is basically 1946 and back cause that's the period of time that I deal with. I don't, I have rough outlines of what happened in BLM after that period of time. But things like this give me a better appreciation of the agency.

RON: When I first came to work for BLM in Denver, there was the District Grazier and his Secretary and she knew as much as he did, I'm sure. And she was like the mother to us. I mean, us new kids, you know, and she'd help us through all the administrative things.

BOB: How many were there in the office? The Grazier and the Secretary and?

RON: And there was one other range guy. There was a soil and moisture guy, soil and watershed guy.

BOB: That's interesting.

RON: And the new Forester. And I worked for him initially as a temporary and later full-time. That's all. And the Grazier and the Secretary. In fact, we were in one room about this size.

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